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6 For ye Rev^d Mr Higginson in Salem.

The Wicked mans Portion.

OR

A SERMON

(Preached at the *Lecture* in *Boston* in *New-England* the 18th day of the 1 Moneth 1674. when two men were *executed*, who had *murthered* their Master.)

Wherein is shewed

That excesse in wickedness doth bring untimely Death.

By *INCREASE MATHER*, Teacher of a Church of Christ.

Prov. 10. 27. *The fear of the Lord prolongeth dayes, but the years of the wicked shall be shortned.*

Eph. 6. 2, 3. *Honour thy Father and thy Mother (which is the first Commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the Earth.*

Pæna ad paucos, metus ad omnes.

BOSTON,
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259,451
March 28/79

TO THE READER.

THE *ensuing* Sermon *was*, (*as is in the Title Page expressed*) *Preached upon a very sad & solemn occasion. I did not know that it would fall to my Lot to attend that service, a whole week before, and much other business was upon my hands at the same Time, necessary to be done; in which respect nothing but what is* Plain *and* Common *is to be expected in this Discourse. Yea and if I had had never so much time for Preparation, it is my* Principle, (*and those few in the world that know any thing of me, will testify that my continued Practice is according to that Principle*) *that* Plainess in delivering the Truths of God, *is always to be endeavoured after; but more especially when such awfull occasions are presented, as caused the Preaching of this Sermon.* Plain food is best *in a Spiritual as well as in a Natural sense.*

Cibus simplex Optimus.

Little did I think of Printing this sermon when I Preached it; but that God who sometimes giveth favor *to those who are not* men of skill *hath so ordered by his Providence as that many have desired, that it might be thus exposed to the view of the world; out of respect to whose Importunity, I have transcribed for them a Copy of what was spoken, and that not onely as to the* things, *but (since that was desired) as nigh as I could remember, in the same* words, *which were delivered.*

If I may by this Publication be instrumental to prevent any from sinning against God; & if the Lord will bless these poor Meditations for the good of young ones *amongst us* (*especially such as are of* the Rising Generation in New-England, *for whose sakes I am most willing, not onely to Preach, and to write, but to dy, if I may but thereby Promote their* Conversion *and* Salvation) *I have then my whole desire.*

The blessing of the God of Heaven, go along with his own Truth. which is the Prayer of

Boston, N. E.
15. of 2 Moneth,
1675.

Thine in Christ,

Increase Mather.

Eccle^{s}

Eccles, 7. 17.

Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish; why shouldest thou dye before thy time ?

SOlomon being a man full of wisdome, was very observant of the Providences of God, which hapned in the place and in the age wherein he lived. He doth in this Chapter give us an account of some of his Observations that way, There is one special Observation in this Context, *viz* in the 15 verse of this Chapter, where we have the wise man saying, *There is a just man that perisheth in his Righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness*. Now lest any one should abuse this doctrine of the just mans perishing in his righteousness, and the wicked mans prolonging his life in his wickedness, He proceeds to a double exhortation.

1. He doth exhort to beware of errors on the right hand. verse 16th. where there are two errors on the right hand mentioned.

1. Overmuch Righteousness. *Be not righteous overmuch.* Not that it is possible for any man to have more of real Goodness in him, than he ought to have: but he may be more righteous in his own Conceit, than he should be; and he may be Superstitious, he may adde to the Word of God, which is the rule of Righteousness, Men may likewise be more severe in punishing Offenders then the Rule doth allow of, the Corinthians did sometimes erre on that hand, and that is to be righteous overmuch.

2, Overmuch Wisdome. *Neither make thy self overwise.* which must be understood as the former Particular, A man may

be wiser in his own eyes, than he ought to be, He may be wise above what is written, He may pry into the secrets of the Almighty, and endeavour to trace him whose wayes, are past finding out, and whose Footsteps are not known. And this Exhortation is urged from the Consideration of the wofull effect of this overmuch wisdome and righteousnes, *viz* self destruction. *Why shouldest thou destroy thy self?* As the moth that will venture too neer to the light, destroyeth it self, so they that will be overwise, and will needs know more than God would have them to know, destroy themselves.

2. The other exhortation is against Errors on the Left hand; of which there are two mentioned in this verse and in the words which have been read, in opposition to the two former spoken of in the verse immediately foregoing.

v. *Drusij* Annot. in Loc.

1, *Be not overmuch Wicked.* q. d. though you must not be righteous overmuch, yet take heed of erring on the other extream, which our nature is most prone unto. The Hebrew is, אַל תִּרְשַׁע הַרְבֵּה h. e. *do not wickedly much.* Not that the Preacher doth allow of any wickedness at all onely his designe is to shew the evill of all excess in wickedness.

See pemble. expos. p. 85.

Noli esse stultus. *Hieron.*

2. Another error on the left hand is Foolishness. *Neither be thou Fooliſh.* Heb. וְאַל תְּהִי סָכָל h. e. *Neither be thou a Fool*, because all wickedness is folly, and sinners are Fools, as afterwards we shall shew. And this exhortation is likewise pressed by an argument taken from the miserable end that such sinners come to at last, God in his righteous Providence doth many Times so order that they dy before their Time. *Why shouldest thou dy before thy Time?* It is as if it were said, Though it be so that here and there a wicked man doth prolong his life in his wickedness, yet for any one thence to embolden himself in sin, is the greatest folly imaginable, for usually it falls out otherwise, that wickedness doth shorten the dayes of those that are guilty of it.

Tametsi aliquando fit ut improbi in suis iceleribus Consenescant, tamen ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ fit ut improborum brevis & contracta vita sit. *Cartwright* in Loc.

Doct. The Doctrine therefore from the words is,

That the Providence of God doth oftentimes so dispose as that an untimely death shall be the Portion of him that hath been wicked overmuch.

In

In the Doctrinal handling of this Truth, Three things may be attended.

1. To enquire how any one may be said to dy before his Time.

2. What overmuch wickedneſs that is which is uſually followed with untimely Death, or when one may be ſaid to be wicked overmuch.

3. The Reaſons of the Doctrine, why God in his providence doth often ſo diſpoſe as that an untimely death ſhall be the Portion of ſuch as have been wicked overmuch.

Queſt. 1. *How can one be ſaid to dy before his Time?*

Anſw. *Not in reſpect of the decree of God.* No man ſhall dy before the Time which the Lord hath determined be fulfilled. The Time of every mans Death is appointed. Hence Job ſaith Chap. 14. verſe 14. *All the dayes of my appointed Time will I wait till my change come.* and in the 5th verſe of that Chapter it is ſaid, *Seing his dayes are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs.* Not onely the years but the moneths, nay the dayes which every man ſhall live are determined by the Lord, ſo as that he ſhall not live a day longer, nor dy a day ſooner than was before appointed. But a man may be ſaid to dy before his Time. See Mr Cotton on Eccleſ 7. 17.

1. *In reſpect of his own expectation.* He may dy before ever he doth expect Death. Hence ſinners are ſaid to dy ſuddenly. 1 Theſſ. 5. 3. *When they ſhall ſay peace and ſafety, then ſudden deſtruction cometh upon them as travel upon a woman with child and they ſhall not eſcape.* Sudden deſtruction cometh upon ſinners, that is, not onely which is in it ſelf ſudden, but as to their expectation ſo. Thus in the Parable concerning the wicked ſervant. Math. 24. 48, 49, 50. *If that evil ſervant ſhall ſay in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming; and ſhall begin to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, the Lord of that ſervant ſhall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.* So doth He dy before his Time wherein he expected death is come. It is often ſo with them that have been very wicked and Fooliſh; wherefore it is ſaid in the Parable concerning

the

the Fool when he thought he had many years to live. Luke 12. 20. *God said unto him Thou Fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee.* Hence,

2. *A sinner may be said to dye before his Time, in respect of his Preparation for a dying hour.* Death may come upon him, before he is prepared to encounter with that enemy. And then he dyeth indeed, *in dying he shall dy*, if death find him unprepared; the second death taketh hold on that soul. The devills sometimes said to Jesus Christ, *Art thou come to torment us before our Time.* Truly such a soul goeth to the Place of Torment before his Time. There is many a sinner that death finds without an Interest in Jesus Christ, There is some sin that he hath not repented of, nay it may be he hath not truly repented of so much as one sin, and then he is not prepared to dy. It had been better for him that he had never been born, than that he should dye and go out of the world in that Condition,

3. *A sinner may dy before that Time be fulfilled, which according to the ordinary course of nature he might have lived.* And this is especially intended here in the Text. why shouldst thou dye *before thy time*, Hebr. בְּלֹא עִתֶּךָ *and not in thy Time.* that is to say, before that time which according to the ordinary course of nature thou mightest have lived, be expired. Many times the Divine Providence doth so order as that they who have been wicked overmuch shall not live out that time. Thus concerning the world of the ungodly which lived before the flood, Eliphaz saith *Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have troden, who were cut down out of time*, Job. 22 15, 16. According to the ordinary course of Nature, they might have lived a Long Time, but they were cut down by the stroke of Death. wicked men never dy before they are ripe in sin, but they often dy before they are ripe in Nature. They are caried and chased out of the world by some violent death.

See Mr Caryl on Job 22. 16.

Sometimes this is brought to pass by the Lords immediate hand. If men be generally wicked overmuch, the Lord

sends

ſends Publick deſtroying Judgments, whereby thouſands dy before their Time. ſo on the old world, ſo on Sodom and Gomorrha; in the morning they were well and likely to have lived many a fair day, but dead and damned before night. Thoſe ſore Judgments of Famine, Plague, and Sword, come and ſweep away multitudes before their time, when a people are become wicked overmuch. And Particular Judgments do hence come upon Particular perſons, whereby they were cut of *before their Time.* There was that wicked *Er* and his wicked brother *Onan*, did commit abominable uncleaneſs in the ſight of God, and therefore the *Lord ſlew them,* that they *dyed before their Time.* ſo *Nadab and Abihu* were wicked overmuch, and there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they dyed before the Lord. *Corah* and his complices *wickedneſs was amongſt them and in their dwellings*, and as the Pſalmiſt (alledging to that very Judgment) ſpeaketh *Death ſeiſed upon them and they went down quick into hell.* Pſal. 55.15. Ananias and Saphira were wicked overmuch when they committed Sacriledg, and alſo ſinned and lyed in a Church Aſſembly where there is a ſpecial Preſence of the Spirit of God, and they became guilty of lying to the Holy Ghoſt, wherefore firſt the one of them fell down and gave up the Ghoſt, and then the other, and thence were both caſt into one grave and this before their Time. The Scripture is full of awfull inſtances to this Purpoſe. Again ſometimes Gods Vicegerents are improved as executioners of his wrath and juſtice upon ſuch ſinners. The Magiſtrate beareth not the ſword in vain, but is the Miniſter of God a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evill. Hence David ſpeaketh ſaying, *I will early deſtroy all the wicked of the Land, that I may cut of the wicked doers from the city of the Lord.* Pſal. 110.8. I will early deſtroy them, in the original it is; *in the morning* I will deſtroy them, becauſe in thoſe Times *Malefactors* were *executed* in the morning; and thats his meaning, that He would ſee *execution* done upon Capital *Offenders.* Thus Sauls curſed Poſterity was cut off by the hand of Juſtice,

because of the *Murther* which their Father had commited, and no doubt but they had been some way Accessary, in in consenting, or approving, or not duly bearing witness against that iniquity.

Sometimes again the Lord in a Judicial way giveth up such sinners to the Power of Satan, and their own Corruptions, so as that they become their own executioners, as we se in *Judas*, who after he had brought himself under the guilt of innocent blood, went to the halter to let out his wretched soul,

But thus much may suffice to be spoken to the first enquiry, we come to the second thing propounded, Namely, *What overmuch wickedness that is which is usualy followed with untimely death, or when a man may be said to be wicked overmuch?*

Answ. 1. *When he doth make himself to be more wicked than ind ed he is.* e. g. When he doth falsly accuse himself to be guilty of this or that which he was never actually guilty of. There are such woful fooliſh creatures in the world, that glory in their shame, and take a pride in saying that they have committed this or that abomination, which yet it may be they never did commit. It is just with God, that such should *dy before their Time*, and that they should be dealt with, as if they were really guilty thereof; as we se in the Instance of that Amalekite, who accused himself as having an hand in Sauls death. It is a question whether he had so really or no, yet inasmuch as he accused Himself, David condemned him, 2 Sam 1. 16. *David said thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee saying, I have slain the Lords anointed.* So when any poor creature shall say that he hath out-stood and sinned away the day of Grace, albeit the Holy Spirit is secretly striving with him still, or that he hath sinned against the Holy-Ghost. Or that his sin is greater than the mercy God. As *Francis Spira* after his Apostacy uttered such a desperate blasphemy as that *my sin* (said He) *is greater than the mercy of God*. And thus it was with despairing bloody Cain, he said, *mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven.*

Gen.

Gen. 4. 13. *Austin* doth well reply upon him, *mentiris Cain*, thats a Lye Cain, thy sin is not greater than can be forgiven. Some have observed that Cains Desperation and blasphemy, was a greater evil than his *Murther* was, when he shed the innocent blood of his own Brother. And indeed despair layeth the Foundation for all excess in wickedness, it maketh men to become no better than devils incarnate; and causeth them to dye before their Time, witness Judas who in despair hanged Himself; And have not wee in our dayes known or heard of many rufull instances of that Kind?

Mr Hooker on Act. 2 37.

2 *When a man shall become guilty of such sins as are of a very hainous nature, then he may be said to be wicked overmuch.* There are Scarlet sins, Crimson abominations, which the Heavens blush to behold. There are bloody sinners, whose souls lye bleeding under Prodigious guilt, even such as have been guilty of evils; that by the Law of God and man are *Capital Crimes*, these are they that have been *wicked overmuch.* to mention onely one or two Crimes.

Murther is a great and horrid wickedness, and so Capital as that whoever hath been guilty of it, may in no case be pardoned by man. Numb. 35. 30,31. *Whoso Killeth any person, the murtherer shall be put to death, moreover they shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murtherer which is Guilty of death, but He shall be surely put to death.* And they that have been guilty of this *wickedness*, usually *dy before their Time*, according to that scripture Psal. 55. 23. *But thou O God shalt bring them down to destruction, bloody and deceitfull men should not live out half their dayes.* It is thought by some that Cain. (who was the first murtherer amongst men) dyed before his Time. The Jews have a Tradition that Lamech killed Cain and a young man that was with him hunting in the woods; To this purpose some understand that place (our version doth evidently favor that Interpretation) Gen. 4. 23.24. *Lamech said, I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt, if Cain be avenged seven fold surely Lamech seventy and seven fold.* However the providence of God, doth usually so dispose as that they

R. *Solomon qui & Jarchi dicitur.*

they who have taken away the lives of others by violence, shall themselves dy a violent and bloody death. Joab murthered Abner and Amasa, and He (though an old man) dyed before his Time, He that had shed the blood of others, his own blood was shed for it at last. Joash conspired against Zachariah and stoned him with stones, and afterwards, *His own servants Conspired against him and slew him.* Many other Instances are recorded in the Scripture, and in humane writings all confirming the Truth of this. Yea God from Heaven doth usually Pursue this sin, with speciall signal Testimonies of his Righteous displeasure. Hence the Lord hath strange wayes to discover this sin. Rather then the *Murderer* shall not be found out, the Heaven shall reveal his iniquity and the Earth shall rise up against him. How often have the fowls of Heaven, and the dumb creatures of the earth brought Murder to Light?

Plutarch. The story is ancient and famous concerning *Bessus* who had murdered his own Father; and sometime after the swallows making a noise in the chimney as it is the manner of those birds to doe, His guilty Conscience was afraid they had told of him, whereupon he goeth to kill the swallows, and being asked the reason, why (saith he) the swallows doe nothing but say *Bessus hath Killed his Father*, *Bessus hath Killed his Father*, whereby he was suspected, and upon examination confessed the fact.

Clarks Examples Vol. 1. p. 230. It is also storied of a souldier belonging to King *Pyrrhus*, that being slain, a dog which he had, could by no means be enticed from the dead body, but the King coming by, he fawned upon him as it were craving help at his hands, whereupon He caused all his army to pass by in order, and when the *murtherers* came the dog flew fiercely upon them, and then fawned upon the King, the souldiers hereupon examined, confessed the *Murther*, and received condign Punishment. Many other Instances to this Purpose I could produce, but I forbear.

Again, *Rebellion* is a Crime which they that are guilty of, are *wicked overmuch.* When Inferiours shall wickedly rise up against Superiours. When Subjects shall in a way of

Rebel-

Rebellion rise up against the Authority which the Lord hath set over them, such often dy before their Time, Hence Christ saith, *All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword* Math. 26.52. that is to say they that take up the sword in a way of Rebellion against Lawfull Authority. That Doctor *Gamaliel* in the speech he made in the Council taketh notice of two examples concerning this. Acts. 5. 36, 37. *Theudas boasting himself to be somebody, to whom a number of men, about four hundred joyned themselves, was slain, and all as many as obeyed him were scattered, and brought to nought, after this man rose up Judas of Gallilee, and drew away much People after him, he also perished, and all even as many as Obeyed him were dispersed.* So when Servants shall rise up in Rebellion against their Masters, it is a wicked thing. wherefore even Jezebel could say, *Had Zimri Peace who slew his Master* 2. Kin. 9. 31. After he had *slain his Master* had he peace in his own Conscience? Did he Prosper after that day? Did not the hand of God follow him till he himself was slain? *Had Zimri Peace who slew his Master?*

So when children shall rebell against their Parents, their wickedness is excessively great. And such Children doe usually dy *before their Time*, witness the fifth Commandment where it is said, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy dayes, may be long upon the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Therefore they that break this Commandment may expect that their dayes shall not be long, but *they shall dye before their Time.* We see it in Absolom, He was a rebellious Child, and what came of him? was he not hanged at last? and three darts thrust through his heart while he was yet alive. And Travellers report that in the same Place where Absolom was buried, there is now a vast heap of stones, which is come to pass by this meanes, it is Customary for every one that passeth by that Place, to throw a stone upon Absolom using these words, *Thus shall it be done to the son that rebels against his Father*, Thus shall it be done to the child that riseth up against his Parents.

2. *When a man shal multiply Transgression then he may be said to be wicked overmuch.* when he shall commit the same sin

over

over and over again. Once is too much ,but many Times is *overmuch* indeed. Eccles. 8.12- *Though a sinner do evill an hundred times.* Alas there is many a sinner that hath done so, He hath made himself drunk *an hundred Times*, He hath been unclean and abominable in the sight of God *an hundred Times*, He hath lyed against his conscience *an hundred Times*, then *he hath been wicked overmuch.* So when a vile creature shall *adde sin to sin*, as the Prophet complaineth of them, Isai. 30. 1. When he shall adde new transgressions to old sins, sins of age to sins of youth, later to former iniquities. What saith the Scripture? 1 Pet. 4. 3. *the Time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousnes, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings* &c. Therefore when a sinner shall adde new debts to the old score, it is *more than sufficeth*, that is to say, He is *wicked overmuch.*

3. *They that are incorrigible in the wayes of sin, are wicked overmuch.* Who sin against all meanes that can be used to reclaim them. There are such sinners as do dispise all means, they will take no warning. Though God himself speaketh to them by awfull Providences, taking some and hanging them up before their eyes, yet they will go on still in their trespasses. And though they that are the Lords vicegerents on earth, do establish and execute severe and righteous Laws, and put sin and sinners to shame, yet they still continue to transgres against the Lord. This doth evidence a desperately wicked man. It is spoken concerning a man that is beyond measure wicked, that he doth *run upon the thick bosses of the Buckler of the Almighty* Job. 15. 26. What is the Buckler of the Almighty? It is the Word of God, And what are the thick *Bosses* of that Buckler? They are the threatnings and sanctions annexed to that Word. When sinners shall transgres in a Land where there are Laws established and regulated according to the Word of God, and those Laws faithfully executed, they *run themselves upon the thick Bosses of te Buckler of the Almighty*, and therefore are despereatly wicked. And there are that sin against the light of the Gospel and reproofs administred in the Word and

Name

Name of God: such are *wicked overmuch*, and have cause to fear that they shall *dye before their Time*. witness that awfull scripture Prov. 29. 1. *He that being often reproved hardneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* And there are that despise reproofes, instructions, admonitions, exhortations, privately administred in Familyes, by masters, Parents; such are also *wicked overmuch*, and do often *dy before their Time*. Witness the sons of Eli, of whome it is said, *they harkned not to the voice of their Father, because the Lord would slay them* 1 Sam. 2. 25. Doth thy Father give thee good counsel? but wilt thou not harken to him? This is a sign, that *the Lord will slay thee*. Remember those proud and profane young men, the sons of Eli, they regarded not what their Father said to them, and therefore they dyed before their Time. This cometh of not harkning to the voice of a Father.

5. *They that mind nothing but this world and the vanityes and lusts thereof are wicked overmuch.* Even they that live like Athists without God in the world. And this last Particular suits with the scope of this Context. For as they are *righteous overmuch* who under pretence of Religion neglect their particular Callings, so they are *wicked overmuch* who neglect duties of Religion, out of respect to the world. There are that live in a continual neglect of God & of their ownsouls and Salvation. Hence no prayer it may be not so much as in the Family, no reading of the Scriptures, no Meditation, no self-examination. How do men live as if there were no world but this, as if there were no God to serve, and they had no souls to save? Certainly, all such are *wicked overmuch*.

אל תרשע significat, ne nimium commovere negotiis seculi, ne nimis & immôdicus esto in illis perpetuô immersus, & nil aliud unquam animo irrequieto cogitans, ut contra ab illis plane tete avertere est nimis justum esse. *Mercer* in Locum.

And thus have wee done with the second thing propounded in order to the cleering of the *Doctrine* before us. Wee come to the third Particular, *viz* to enquire into the Reasons of this Doctrine, *why God in his Providence doth often times so dispose as that an untimely death shall be the portion of him that hath been wicked overmuch?*

For Answer, we shall onely mention two *Reasons*, breifly.

1. *The Lord doth this that he may manifest his righteous dis-* Reas.

displeasure against sin Hebr. 1. 13. *He is of purer eyes than to behold evill, and cannot look on iniquity*, that is to say with approbation or without detestation and indignation against sin. The blessed Holy God doth bear an infinite detestation and indignation against sin. Hence he leaveth *Marks of his displeasure* upon the sinner, as God set a *mark* upon Cains forehead, so he sets a *mark of displeasure* upon notorious Transgressors. Yea sometimes when he forgiveth the sin, yet he doth visit with Temporal vengeance, that so the world may see that sin is odious and abominable in the sight of God. Hence such sinners as the Text speaketh of, *must dye before their Time.*

Reas 2. *That so others may thereby be warned and deterred from the Commission of the like evills.* Thus it was with Lots wife, she dyed before her Time, that so others might be warned by her example, to beware of becoming guilty of the same sin, which she was so awfully punished for. therefore Christ said to his disciples, Luke. 17. 32. *Remember Lots wife*, meaning so remember her, as that you may for ever take heed of doing as she did. She was turned into a pillar of salt, that others might be seasoned thereby and preserved from the like evill. God is wise and wonderfull in his Providences, and knoweth how to order the death of two or three so as to prevent the destruction of many thereby. Hence he hath appointed that Justice shall be *executed* in a solemn way, upon *Capital offenders*, that others may hear and fear, and none may do any more so wickedly. We find the Lord himself giveth this Reason of this matter. Deut. 13. 8,9,11. *Thou shalt not hearken unto him, neither shall thine eye pitty him, neither shalt thou spare, but thou shalt surely Kill him; and all Israel shall hear and fear and shall doe no more any such wickedness as this is among you.*

Wee come now to Apply this Doctrine. There are two Uses to be insisted on, 1. By way of *Instruction* or *Information*, 2. By way of *Exhortation*.

1. By way of *Information*, Inf. 1. *We may see by this, that sin is the greatest folly in the world.* Well might Solomon say as in the Text, *neither be thou foolish*, For to sin and doe wickedly

wickedly is the greateſt fooliſhneſs that ever was or can be. Sin is a departure from the Rule of Wiſdome. For a man to part with his life for nothing, is not that monſtrous folly? And thus doth a wretched ſinner doe. Mens ſins are unfruitfull works of darkneſs. What Profit had you of thoſe things whereof ye are now aſhamed? Sin is the moſt unprofitable thing in the world. It is good for nothing, neither for body, nor ſoul, nor name, nor eſtate, but brings death and ruin upon all. A man by ſin(eſpecially ſome ſins) looſeth his Name. A wound and diſnonour doth he get, and a reproach that that ſhall not be wiped away. And he loſeth his life, and that *before the Time* as the Text ſheweth, yea and without repentance will looſe his ſoul for ever. Prov. 8. 36. *Hee that ſinneth againſt me wrongs his own ſoul.* The Impenitent ſinner brings ruin upon his own ſoul. Therefore ſin is folly, and and the more ſinfull the more fooliſh. The greateſt Sinners are the greateſt Fooles in all the world. Wherefore it is ſaid Eccl 9. 3. *The Heart of the ſons of men is full of evill, & madneſs is in their Heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.* Yea to the Damned! O what horrible madneſs is it, for any man, that ſo he may enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon, to venture eternall damnation of his precious and immortall ſoul?

Infor. 2. *It followeth from hence, that ſhortneſs of dayes is in it ſelf a judgment.* For it is threatned as a Puniſhment of wickedneſs. It is a fruit of ſin and of the curſe. If Adam had not ſinned there would have been no ſhort lives, none of his Poſterity ſhould have had their lives ſhortned. And in the times of the Reſtitution of all things, when the Curſe ſhall be removed, it will not be as at this day. Rev. 21. 4. *There ſhall be no more death.* To be ſure there ſhall be no more ſuch untimely death as our eyes doe with ſadneſs behold this day. Look as long life is in it ſelf a bleſſing, and therefore is Promiſed as ſuch in the Scripture Pſal. 91. 16. *With long life will I ſatisfie him,* Prov. 4. 10. *Receive my ſayings, and the years of thy life ſhall be many.* and 10. 27. *The fear of the Lord prolongeth dayes.* Whatever any true beleiver hath done or ſuffered for, or according to the will

of God, whilst he was in the world, shall come in upon the account at the last and great day, a glorious reward of mercy shall be given for it, thence is it, so great a mercy to live long. So on the other hand, short life is a great-judgment, and is often threatned as such in the Scripture. Prov. 10. 27. *The years of the wicked shall be shortned.* Eccles. 8.13. *Neither shall he prolong his dayes,* And it is mentioned as an heavy Imprecation. Psal 109. 8. *Let his dayes be few.* For when a wicked man dyeth (dying in his sins) He is undone for ever. when once his body is *gone down into the pit* of the grave, and his soul is *gone down into the pit* of eternall darkness, He cannot hope for the mercy of God, He cannot hope for the pardon of his sin, He cannot hope for the salvation of his soul. Therefore short life is in it self a judgment. Onely as to the elect of God, it is turned into a mercy. As afflictions are in themselves evill and fruits of the curse, but to beleivers they become the greatest blessings. So an untimely death is in it self a great evill, but to one that belongs to the election of grace, it becometh a wonderfull mercy, for it hasteneth his eternall hapiness and glory.

Infor. 3. *Hence it likewise followeth that Righteousness is the way to obtain long life.* If wickedness bring untimely death, then *Righteousness will deliver from death.* There is no righteous man, but shall live in this world so long as life shall be good for him to enjoy.

But some one will say, do we not see that good men dye when they are young as well as others?

Answ. Very true. As there are some that are *too wicked to live long*, So there are others that are *too Good to live long*, in such an evill wretched world as this. Jeroboams godly son, dyed in his youth. Josiah a most eminent servant of the Lord, dyed in the middest of his dayes. Enoch though the best man, and the best minister of God, in all the world in his time, was taken out of the world before he had lived half so long as men in those dayes were wont to live, but then it would not be good for them to live any longer. God is *onely wise* and faithfull, and therefore he taketh his servants to himself, when he seeth that life will not be best for them.

Besides

Beſides, a man may live long in a little Time. It is ſaid, *the child ſhall dye an hundred years old.* Iſai. 65. 20. Though a child in reſpect of years, yet he ſhall have the grace, and gravity, the wiſdome and knowledge of a man that hath lived an hundred years. And indeed that is moſt deſirable; It is in many reſpects a great mercy to be freed from the prevailing infirmityes of old age, and therefore to live long in a little time is moſt deſirable, As I remember Mr. *Cotton* in an Epiſtle which he hath Prefixed to one of Mr. *Nortons* Bookes, taketh notice if it, with reference to Dr. *Preſton*, that it was *his conſtant deſire affectation and expreſſion, that he might live long in a little Time*, and the Lord granted him the deſire of his heart therein. Some live longer in ſeven years, then others doe in ten times ſeven years. They doe more for God and more for his People in ſeven years then others do in twenty, forty, threeſcore, or in fourſcore years. Moreover, that promiſe of long life will be fulfilled to the righteous in the life to come. As indeed all promiſes (and threatnings too) are fully accompliſhed in the world to come. There the righteous ſhall *live for ever.* It was promiſed to to Chriſt, that he ſhould be ſatisfied with long life. Pſal. 91. & the laſt. And that he ſhould *prolong his dayes.* Iſai. 53. 10. Yet we know that Chriſt was not in this world much above two and thirty years. How then did he *prolong his dayes?* In the other world his *dayes* are *prolonged to eternity*, according to the Scripture Pſal. 21. 4. *He asked life of thee, and thou gaveſt it him, length of dayes for ever and ever.*

See Mr Cottons Epiſtle before Mr Nortons Orthodox Evangeliſt.

Uſe. 2. Let it be a word of *Exhortation* 1. Here is a generall word of exhortation. 2. More Particular.

1. *Let us all be exhorted to make a right Improvement of ſuch awfull Providences as the Text ſpeaks of.* There is ſuch a Providence before us this day, which hath occaſioned me to ſpeak from theſe words at this Time. For truly I think God would not have us ſuffer ſuch ſolemn awfull Providences as theſe to paſs away without taking ſpeciall notice of them, and making ſome good Improvement thereof.

You will ſay, *But what uſe ſhould we make of this awfull Providence?*

Answ. *It should cause us humbly to reflect upon our own vile natures.* Have we been kept from the like evills that others have been guilty of? No thanks to our own hearts, for wee have the same nature that they have, and if God had given us up to our own hearts lusts, wee should have been as bad as they, or as any of the children of men, that ever were in the world. Wherefore the Apostle in the third Chapter to the Romanes, discoursing of the state of men by nature, saith *Their feet are swift to shed blood* v. 15. Why, Is every natural man a *Murderer?* Truly, he hath a *Murderers heart* within him, and he would quickly shed blood; He would actually commit *Murder*, if God did not restrain him. How should this thought humble us, and make us vile in our own eyes?

Mr Bradford. As I Remember it is noted concerning that blessed Martyr, that if he did hear of any that were condemned or accused on the account of Witchcraft, Murder, Robberies or any other Impiety, He would smite upon his breast and say, *In this breast of mine, is that which would have caused mee, to have been guilty of the same evill, if the Grace of God had not prevented mee.* And it is recorded of one of the Ancients, that he was never told of any great wickedness committed by others, but it did him some Good, it made him the more distrustfull of his

Bernard own Heart, Hee would say *Ille heri, tu hodiè, ego cras.* Hee committed that sin yesterday, thou diddest commit the same sin to day, and I shall commit it to morrow if the Grace of God do not restrain and prevent mee.

2. Another Use which we should make of this Awfull Providence is. *To consider sadly whether there be not some prevailing evill, that the Lord doth hereby rebuke and seek to humble us for:* I fear there is such an evill, I mean with respect to those wofull *breaches of the fifth Commandment* which are to be found amongst us. This is a prevailing evill, wee may see it every where. How do Inferiors rise up against Superiors? Look into the Commonwealth, and wee shall find that *Magistrates* are not honoured and acknowledged in their places as ought to be. Look into Churches, and how do some carry it there, as if that Scripture were *Apocrypha* even that Scripture Heb. 13. 17. where it is said *Obey them*

that have the rule over you, and submit your selves, for they watch for your souls. Look into Schools, and how doe Children contemn and dispise and disobey their masters contrary to the *fifth Commandment?* Look into Families, and O what disobedient Children? O what unruly servants may we find there? Nay, Look into the streets, and there we may observe (I have sometimes beheld it not altogether without greif and shame) the child behaving himself proudly against the Antient, and the base against the Honourable: so that in this respect *New-England* is in a great measure become degenerate from the good manners of the *Christian world.* If there be any prevailing iniquity in *New-England* this is it. And therefore no marvel! that such an awfull Providence doth come to rebuke and humble us, that servants have conspired together to Kill their Master. There hath been no such deed done or seen in our Israel before now. And mark what I say, If ever *New-England* be destroyed, this very sin of disobedience to the *fifth Commandment* will be the ruine of this Land.

3. Another Use wee should make of this Providence, is *to beware of those sins which do often times end in untimely death.* *Pride* is one of those sins. *Corah* was a Proud man, He could not bear to be subject to that order neither in Church nor Commonwealth, which God had appointed, and *Hee dyed not the common death of all men.* Haman was exceeding proud and highminded, and his pride brought him to the Gallows at last. But what need wee goe far for examples? One of these poor condemned Creatures that is here standing before the Lord this day, saith that he thinks his pride hath been his ruine. I asked him the other day in the prison, what sin it was that he thought in his Conscience God was provoked with him for, so as to leave him to that which hath brought him under this condemnation? He told me, he thought it was for his Pride. *For he thought much of it that such an one as He should be a servant, and he sometimes used such words as these, I am flesh and blood as well as my Master and therefore I know no reason why my Master should not obey me as well as I obey him.* Thus did he say, and now we see what his Pride

hath

brought him unto, therefore beware of that sin.

And *Idleness* is a sin that doth bring many to a miserable end at last. It was one of those sins which caused thousands in Sodom and Gomorrah to *dy before their Time* in a dreadfull manner. As for one of these poor condemned Creatures *Idleness* hath been his bane. He would not diligently follow the calling which he was set in, but lived an Idle vagrant life, and what is he now come to? Therefore beware of that sin.

And *Disobedience to Parents* is a sin that is often punished with untimely death. (as was partly intimated before) One of these that are to be *executed* this day, doth confess that his disobedience to his Parents hath provoked the Lord, to bring this misery upon him. He saith that when he was a Child his Father gave him good Instructions and prayed for him, but he regarded it not. His Father would have had him gone to School, but he would not. His Father would have had him gone to a Trade but he would not; And after his Father was dead, he would not be subject to those that had the care and charge of him, but ran away from them, and since that from time to time hath run away from them that have been his Masters. And now behold what all this disobedience hath brought him unto. All you *disobedient Children* that are here before the Lord this day, hearken to the Word of the Lord. There is a Scripture which methinks should strike Terror and Trembling into your Souls, It is that Prov. 30. 17. *The eye that mocketh his Father, and despiseth to obey his Mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles eat it.* The eye that mocketh his Father. Stubbornes and contempt is to be seen in the eye, therefore the meaning is, that he that is stubborn and rebellious against his Father, shall be so dealt with. Well, a Father hath many times that Wisdome and Authority with him, that the child dare not disobey him, but he careth not for his Mother; Therefore it is added, *He that despiseth to obey his Mother.* You Children that disobey your Mothers hearken to this; The ravens are like to feed upon you; that is to say such sinners shall come to an untimely death, and it may be not have a decent

a decent honourable buriall. It is to be feared that such children will come to the Gallows, and be hanged up in Gibbets for the ravens and eagles to feed upon them if they will. And it is greatly do be observed, that the most of those that dy upon the Gallows, do confess that they have been guilty of disobedience to Parents. Yea God is so provoked with such wicked children, as that he doth sometimes leave them against nature to destroy themselves as a just Punishment of unnaturall disobedience. There was an awfull example of this, which hapned in this Country about fifteen years agoe. I was not my self in this Land at that time, but I have had an account of it from those that knew it. A young man drowned himself, but before he did that, he left a writing directed to his Father, wherein he had such words as these, *O Father, I have kept my soul as long as ever I could; My ruine was, the pride and stubbornes of my tender years, which should have been fetcht out with sharp correction; and evill counsel and company hath been my undoing. I have a young brother that follows my steps, he is going the wide way to destruction, I beseech you take pains with, him & correct him as well as counsel him, that he may not be undone soul and body as well as I.* Words to this purpose, did that perishing young man (though the son of a Godly Father) write when he was going into eternity. You *disobedient children* think of it, and the Lord strike it home to your Hearts.

Abraham Warner at Hartford in Conecticut.

Drunkennes also, is a sin, that often brings those that are guilty of it to a miserable end at last. A vile creature, it may be when he is drunk, He will goe and drown himself, and his soul goe down into eternall darkness in that condition, or he will commit some horrid sin, for which the sword of Justice will Cut him off. When he is drunk He will commit Adultety, or a Rape it may be. Alass we hear that such a villany hath been Committed of late, in a Plantation not far off; Or in his drink Hee'le Kill a man, and so *dye before his Time.* Therefore beware of that sin.

And *Covetousnes* is a sin, which many Times brings untimely death, It did so upon Achan. The Love of money is is the root of all evill. This hath occasioned many a bloody

yea

unnatural *Murther.* the ſtory is famouſly known of a man in *Cornwell*, that his ſon having been many years abſent from him and coming home with a Portmantue full of ſilver and Gold, and his Parents not knowing who he was, for the ſake of his money conſpire together, and in the night time cut his throat, and in the next morning when they knew it was their own ſon whom they had *Murthered*, they did in anguiſh and horror, both of them deſtroy themſelves.

See Clarks Examples the 2d. vol. P. 458 See alſo the ſame ſtory & another like to it in Dr Taylors addition to the Theater of Judgments. P. 71,72

And there is a Tragical ſtory lately printed, of a profane young man, that Killed his own Mother that bare him, out of hopes that when ſhe was dead, He ſhould enjoy her eſtate. For which he was put to a moſt dreadfull Death, weights of iron and ſtone were layed upon him for two dayes together, until his life and ſoul were preſſed out of his body. This *execution* was was done juſt about four years agoe. Therefore take heed and beware of Covetouſneſs.

viz. Henry Jones who was executed at Monmouth in Wales March 11. 1671.

Alſo take heed of giving way to paſſions, revenge, anger and the like. Theſe two condemned creatures, their maſter corrected them, and as they thought dealt hardly with them, and therefore in wicked paſſion, wrath, and rage they would take an axe and knock him in the head, for which now they muſt dye.

Beware alſo of giving way to *Diſcontents* and ſullen *Melancholy*, for that alſo cauſeth ſome to dye before their Time. There is a lamentable ſtory lately Publiſhed, of a woman that in pangs of Melancholy diſcontent went to diſtroy her ſelf ſeveral times, but was by the Providence of God prevented, but afterwards giving way to thoſe Temptations, and not humbling her ſelf on the account of former miſcariages, ſhe embrewed her hands in the blood of her own Child, for the which ſhe was afterwards executed, near to the place where ſhe had committed that unnatural Cruelty and *Murther.* Therefore let us beware of giving way to the diſtempered workings of our own ſpirits.

viz *Mary* Cooke who was executed in Smith-field in London *March* 2. 1669

But thus for the word of General Exhortation.

2. Let me more particularly exhort, *thoſe that have been wicked overmuch.* You that have been guilty of great ſins and

and provocations before the Lord, *O Repent and turn to God in Jesus Christ*, Return Return O sinners return, return. Stop sinners! stop, goe no further, if you love your lives goe no further. *Why should you dye before your Time?* It may be Repentance may save your Lives. There have been some that have been guilty of Capital Crimes, yet when they have repented and turned to God in Jesus Christ, He hath covered their sins, that the world hath never known of them. However if there be true Repentance, the lives of your souls shall be saved. In some cases Repentance cannot prevent the *first death*, but it will alwayes (if sound and sincere) prevent the *second death*. Oh! then Turn to God in Jesus Christ.

And I would apply this more Particularly unto these poor Guilty Condemned Creatures, who are standing in the solemn Presence of the Lord, and whose naked souls must by and by appear before the Lord the Judge of all, to receive a Sentence either of eternal Life, or of eternal Death. Hearken you to the word of the Lord this once. I beseech you mind what I say, because you are now come unto your last hour. It may be there are many here this day, that this is the last Sermon, that ever they shall hear, but as for you the thing is Certain, you shall never hear another Sermon; and therefore let these words sink down into your Ears and Hearts.

Nicholas Feaver who was born in the Isle of Jersey. and Robert Driver who was born in the Isle of *Orkney* in *Scotland.*

A few *Considerations* and *Directions* let me spread before you.

Consider. 1. *That you have been wicked overmuch.* The sin which you are now to dye for is exceeding great, even *Murder.* The Scripture saith that *no Murderer hath eternal life.* And there is another Scripture that saith, that *Murderers shall have their Part in that Lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the second Death.* And no doubt you have been guilty of many other Greivous sins, which have provoked the Lord to leave you unto the Commission of this horrid *Murther.* This *Murther* also is exceedingly aggravated in respect of the person whom you have slain, even your *Master.* O how have you risen up in

Rebellion againſt the glorious Image of God, not onely in that you have ſhed the blood of a man, who was made after the *Image of God*, but ſuch a man as had peculiar *Dominion* over you, in that reſpect you have offered fearfull violence to the ſacred Image of the bleſſed God. So that you have tranſgreſt the *fifth and ſixth Commandments* at once in the higheſt degree that you could doe. And ſince your Apprehenſion, yea Conviction and Condemnation you have told many lies (at leaſt one of you, it is to be feared both of you) againſt your Conſcience.

2. Conſider that *now you muſt dye before your Time*. eſpecially one of you, a poor young creature that hath hardly lived twenty years in this world, and muſt this day be turned out of it. Yea both of you *dy before your Time*. you might according to the ordinary courſe of nature have lived many a year. You muſt be cut off by a violent and dreadfull death. For indeed the anger of the Lord would fall upon this whole Country where your ſin hath been committed, if you ſhould be ſuffered to live.

3. Conſider, *That there is yet a poſſibility for you to eſcape the ſecond death*. Though your ſin be very great, yet God can pardon it. I remember a paſſage concerning a poor creature that was condemned to dye for wickedneſs he had been guilty of (I the rather mention it becauſe he was Country man to one of you) but when he was in Priſon gave good Hopes of his unfaigned Repentance, and when he came to the place of execution, He had this expreſſion, *O! God is a great forgiver, God is a great forgiver*, ſo I ſay to you in his Name, *the Lord is a great Forgiver*, It is his Name to forgive iniquity Tranſgreſſion and ſin. Yea and He hath, (upon deep and unfaigned Repentance) forgiven thoſe that have committed this ſin which you are now to ſuffer for. Manaſſeh ſhed much innocent blood, yet when he humbled himſelf greatly, the Lord was entreated for him. There are ſome in Heaven that were once Bloody ſinners. David was *delivered from Blood-guiltineſs*. Upon his Repentance it was ſaid to him, *The Lord hath*

See the book called the fulfilling the Scriptures. 1.-33.

put

put away thy sin thou shalt not dye, As to *the second death* he did not dye. And Saul (afterwards Paul) had once the guilt of blood upon him, And therefore he made his Confession before the Lord, Saying, *Lord; when the blood of thy Martyr Steven was shed, I also was standing by and Consenting to his death.* Yet when he did repent and Turn to God in Jesus Christ, God forgave him his Iniquity. Know therefore, that there is Mercy enough with God to Pardon and Save as great sinners as you are.

And know, that Jesus Christ the Son of God, Came to *Save the chief of sinners.* There is Merit and Righteousnes enough in Jesus Christ. Hee was bruised for our Iniquityes, and wounded for our Transgressions. The wounds of Christ can make amends for those wounds which you gave your Master, when you slew him. The Blood of Christ can satisfie for the blood which you have shed. Jesus doth deliver from wrath to come. And he doth not exclude you from salvation by him, if you doe not by Impenitency & Unbelief exclude your selves. Neither can the death you suffer hinder the Salvation of your souls, in case you truly repent and believe. Jesus Christ hath been made a Curse, that so he might redeem from the Curse of the Law. Yea Hee (the blessed son of God) was hanged upon a Tree, though Hee never knew any sin, only for the sins of his people; and therefore he hath sanctified all maner of deaths unto those that shall beleive on Him. Oh Consider of it and let it break your Hearts.

4. Consider *Presently it will be too late for you to think of these things.* when once you are dead, when once your souls are out of your bodyes, it will be too late for you to think of these matters. There is no Repenting in the Grave, there is no Believing in Hell. Behold *now* is your accepted Time, *now* is the hour of your Salvation. If you doe not *Now* accept of Jesus Christ upon his own Terms, you will be undone, and damned to all Eternity.

By way of *Direction* I shall speak two or three words.

1, *Doe what you can that God may have glory by you, that little Time that you have to live.* Therefore see that you solemnly

warn others, (especially young ones) to take heed of those evils which your Consciences tell you, have made way for your destruction. And see that you be sincere and ingenuous in making confession of your sin. The Scripture saith *if we confess our sins*, that is with a Penitent broken heart, desirous never more to commit them, *God is faithfull to forgive them.* And again, *Hee that Confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy, but he that hideth his sin shall not prosper.* I charge you in the Name of God, as you will answer it by and by before his Judgments seat, that you doe not deny or disowne what you know is Truth. And I urge this the rather, because you have not been so ingenuous in confessing your evill, as God and men have expected from you. You accuse and impeach one another. The one of you saith, that the other Killed his Master, and you only stood by and did not strike one blow, & so doth the other say. You accuse him and he accuseth you. But deceive not your selves, if you deny what you know is Truth, though God be most mercifull, yet God that made you will not have mercy on you; and though Christ be a Saviour for great sinners, Hee then will not save you. The devill hath brought your bodyes to ruin and now his great design is to destroy your souls. Hee knoweth if he can Perswade you not to give glory to God by *Confessing*, he shall have your souls for ever. I tell you truly if you now disown the Truth, when once your souls are out of your bodyes, they shall suffer the vengeance of eternall fire.

2. *Look up to God in Jesus Christ, that he would give you Repintance and Faith unfaigned.* You cannot convert your selves, but God can doe it, therefore look up to him for that end, and cry mightily to him, as for your lives. If the Magistrate should say to you (they may not, they dare not say so, because then the displeasure of God would come upon them & upon this People) that if you would cry earnestly for your lives, you should have them, O how earnest would you be? Behold, the God of Gods saith to you this day, (and in his name I proclaim it) that if you seek unto him with all your Hearts, it is possible that the sentence of eternall death which is upon your souls may be revoked O then pray for the lives of your

souls.

souls. I Remember it is storied of a poor woman that being Condemned to dye, as soon as the sentence was past, she fell a crying and shriking in a lamentable manner, the Judge rebuked her, and bad her hold her peace, but she replyed *O my lord it is for my life, it is for my life.* So I say to you, O cry to the Lord for Grace and for pardoning mercy, It is for the lives of your souls. yea it is for the lives of your Souls.

And further to awaken hereunto,

3. *Think sadly of eternity* O Eternity Eternity! It is an amazing Meditation. There was a man that said, *If I were to endure the wrath of God for a thousand ysars onely, methinks I could bear it, but when I think of Eternity I am amazed.* I beseech you think seriously of this. I might charge you, and I doe so in the Name of God, but I also *beseech you.* Though you are poor, vile, condemned creatures, yet as I said to you in the Prison, so I say in this solemn Audience. I could be content to ly down at your feet, upon Condition I might be Instrumentall of Good to your Souls, so greatly doe I desire (God is witness) your Salvation; Therefore *I pray you*, for the Lords sake, *I pray you* for your immortall Souls sake, that you would lay these things to Heart, and we will once more cry unto the Lord, that he would have Mercy and Compassion upon those Precious and Immortal Souls of yours.

Mentioned by Dr. Preston in his Sermons of the Attributes. p 165.

Tibi Domine.

Errata

P. 5. l. 9. for were read are.
l. 17. for alledging read alluding.
l. 22. for they read thence.

B.P.L.Bindery.
AUG 19 1879